

Rosh Hashanah First Fruits

Source Sheet compiled by Rabbi Shari Shamah
September 2025



To address the custom of why we eat new fruits on Rosh Hashanah, we first look at the question: Are the two days of Rosh Hashanah treated as 1 day or 2?

Talmud: Beitzah 5b:12

Rava said: Even from the time of the ordinance of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai and onward, an egg remains prohibited. Rava explained his reasoning: Doesn't Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai concede that if witnesses came from minḥah time and onward, even after the destruction of the Temple, then one observes that day as a holy day and also the following day as a holy day? The only difference is that during the time of the Temple any testimony delivered on the first day was not taken into account at all, which meant the second day was considered the first of the new year, whereas during the time of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai the new year was counted from the first day. As far as the sanctity of the Festival is concerned, however, the second day was also treated as sacred, which proves that when two days were observed in Eretz Yisrael, they were considered a single sanctity rather than two.

- The sages of the Talmud use an egg and the calling of witnesses to examine arguments of what the religious status is of the 2nd day. The argument goes back and forth over a chapter of this tractate. It raises the question: Is it a separate holiday (requiring lighting of candles, *kiddush* and *Shehechianu* again)? What about doing work or cooking on the second day? Is it one long holiday or two?
- What do you think, is it one long holiday or two short?
- Is this argument relevant today?
- How do you treat the second day of Rosh Hashanah?

The Shulchan Aruch (16th century, Rabbi Yosef Karo) settles it by saying that the egg laid on day one or fruit picked is forbidden on day two.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 600:1

An egg that is laid on Rosh HaShanah and the Laws of the Kiddush (of Rosh HaShanah), and in it is 3 paragraphs

An egg that is laid on the first day of Yom Tov, and similarly what is trapped on it (i.e. a trap set prior to R'H catches something the 1st day), and that which was detached on it (i.e. fruit from a tree detached on the 1st day etc.) is forbidden on the 2nd day (as well).

Rema: And it has already been explained earlier in Siman 513 Paragraph 5 and Siman 515.

Once we establish that Rosh Hashanah is one long holiday, then we think of ways to set the 2nd day apart. If you don't say *Shehechianu* after candles and *Kiddush* because it's a new holiday, or use the fruit from day one, what can you do?

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<i>Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 600:2</i>	<i>שלחן ערוך, אורח חיים ת"ר</i>
During Kiddush on the 2nd night [of R'H] (wear a new garment) (Haagos Maimoni Chapter 29 from the Laws of Shabbos) place a new fruit, and say the blessing of Shehechyanu. Yet, if there is not found (a new garment or) a new fruit, nonetheless, say Shehechyanu.	בְּקִדּוּשׁ לַיִל שְׁנִי (יִלְבַּשׁ בְּגָד חָדָשׁ) (הַגְהוֹת מִיְמוֹנֵי פ' כ"ט מֵהַל' שַׁבָּת) אוֹ מִנִּיחַ פֶּרִי חָדָשׁ וְאוֹמְרִים שְׁהַחְיֵנוּ וְאִם אֵין מְצוּי (בְּגָד חָדָשׁ אוֹ) פֶּרִי חָדָשׁ עִם כָּל זֶה יֹאמַר שְׁהַחְיֵנוּ

The answer is: New Fruits or New Clothes!

By offering a new fruit on the second day (or wearing new clothes), then we have a reason to say *Shehechyanu* again and make this day just as special.

- What do you think? Is this a sweet loophole?
- What kinds of new fruits would you think add a special element to your Rosh Hashanah?
- What other symbolism does fruit remind us of? What are other connections of fruit in Jewish tradition?
- What's the most exotic fruit you've ever eaten on Rosh Hashanah?

